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IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1 - 5 Cancelled.

Claim 6 (currently amended). ~~The apparatus of Claim 1~~ An optical fiber array apparatus comprising

a housing,

a front mask coupled to said housing and having a matrix of fiber seating openings therethrough, each said opening having one or more stationary side walls,

an unsheathed optical fiber portion extending through each of said openings and having an outer cylindrical side surface,

means for pressing said side surface into engagement with said one or more side walls,

wherein said means comprises at least one movable arm defined by said front mask, and

each said arm having a length substantially longer than the diameter of said fiber and a distal end that contacts said fiber for pressing said fiber against said one or more side walls.

Claim 7 (currently amended). The apparatus of Claim 6 wherein said means comprises at least two of said movable arms defined by said front mask.

Claim 8 cancelled.

Claim 9 (currently amended). The apparatus of Claim ~~8~~ 6 wherein said distal end is located in an initial position relative to said one or more side walls and is moved laterally away from said one or more side walls by said fiber when said fiber is inserted through said opening.

Claim 10 cancelled.

Claim 11 (currently amended). The apparatus of Claim ~~10~~ 6 wherein said at least one side wall comprises at least two side walls, and wherein said at least two side walls intersect each other and said fiber outer surface contacts each of said side walls and said ~~distal end~~ means, and

said means comprises at least two of said movable arms, the distal end of each arm for pressing the fiber toward opposite ones of said two side walls.

Claim 12 cancelled.

Claim 13 (currently amended). ~~The apparatus of Claim 1~~ An optical fiber array apparatus comprising

a housing,

a front mask coupled to said housing and having a matrix of fiber seating openings therethrough, each said opening having one or more stationary side walls,

an unsheathed optical fiber portion extending through each of

said openings and having an outer cylindrical side surface,
means for pressing said side surface into engagement with
said one or more side walls,

wherein said front mask is primarily made of a first
material,

said means includes an element made of a second flexible
material forming one a flexible side wall of each front mask
opening,

said second material being more flexible than said first
material.

Claim 14 (original). The apparatus of Claim 13 wherein said fiber
engages and flexes said element when said fiber is inserted into
its respective opening.

Claim 15 (currently amended). The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein
each of said elements are part of one of a plurality of elongated
members.

Claim 16 (original). The apparatus of Claim 15 wherein

said front mask comprises a plurality of elongated transverse
slots and each of said openings opens into one of said slots, and
each of said elongated members extends along one of said
transverse slots.

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Claim 17 (currently amended). ~~The apparatus of Claim 16~~ An optical fiber array apparatus comprising

a housing,

a front mask coupled to said housing and having a matrix of fiber seating openings therethrough, each said opening having one or more side walls,

an unsheathed optical fiber portion extending through each of said openings and having an outer cylindrical side surface,

means for pressing said side surface into engagement with said one or more side walls,

said means includes an element of flexible material forming one side wall of each front mask opening,

wherein said fiber engages and flexes said element when said fiber is inserted into its respective opening,

wherein each of said elements are part of elongated members,

wherein said front mask comprises a plurality of elongated transverse slots and each of said openings opens into one of said slots, and

wherein each of said members is secured in one of said slots.

Claim 18 (currently amended). The apparatus of Claim 17 wherein

said front masks mask includes projections projecting partially into each of said slot and each projection being located

between two of said openings for restricting the movement of respective members portions when a fiber is inserted through the respective opening therebetween.

Claim 19 (new). The apparatus of Claim 6 wherein

said front mask has a region about each said opening with an axial thickness and each said arm has at least a mid-section axial thickness less than said region with axial thickness.

Claim 20 (new). The apparatus of Claim 6 wherein

each said front mask opening is larger in cross section than the cross section of said fiber portion and bonding material substantially fills a void between the fiber portion and opening side wall.

Claim 21 (new). The apparatus of Claim 13 wherein

each said front mask opening is larger in cross section than the cross section of said fiber portion and bonding material substantially fills a void between the fiber portion and opening side wall.